

Coming out of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) meeting at the White House with President Bush today Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., said, "The CBC very much appreciated the meeting with President Bush and we look forward to the next one. I urged the President to support adding a Voting Rights Amendment to the Constitution and to *extend* and *strengthen* - not weaken - the 1965 Voting Rights Act as a way of spreading freedom and democracy here at home.

"At the UNITY: Journalists of Color Convention on August 6, 2004 - the 39th anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act - Chicago Defender journalist Roland Martin asked President George W. Bush: 'In your remarks you said that 8 million people in Afghanistan registered to vote, and as you said, exercised their God-given right to vote...That may be a right from God, but it's not guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution...And in this age of new constitutional amendments, will you endorse a constitutional amendment guaranteeing every American the right to vote in federal elections?' President Bush responded: 'I'll consider it.' I urged President Bush to do more than consider it, I asked him to support it.

"Secondly, I urged the President to support strengthening and extending the 1965 Voting Rights Act when it comes up for renewal in 2007. There are some in his party who want to weaken it by *eliminating* Section 5 (and Section 4, which sets the triggering formula for who is covered under Section 5); and *weaken* Section 2 by remaking the standard of proof of voter discrimination in a court of law by having to prove *intent* to discriminate rather than having to prove *effect*

. Such a standard would be like asking an NBA referee to call only intentional fouls.

"In his Second Inaugural Address President Bush made clear that seeking freedom and democracy all around the world was a top priority of his. I suggested that it might be more credible if he began by supporting greater freedom and expanding democracy at home," Jackson concluded.